GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:5334
ANSWERED ON:29.04.2002
SETTING UP OF FOREST COMMISSION
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Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to set up a Forest Commission to go into restructuring of the entire forests;

(b) if so, the main objectives thereof;

(c) the strategy of the Government regarding wildlife conservation during 2002-2003; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government to save the forests and wildlife from mafia?

Answer

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU)

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The main objective of the Forest Commission is to look into restructuring, reform and strengthening the entire forest set up and affiliated institutions in the country.

(c) Salient features of the Wild Life Conservation Strategy-2002 adopted during the 21stmeeting of Indian Board for Wildlife held on 21st January, 2002 under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister are furnished in the Annexure.

(d) The steps taken by the Government to save the forests and wildlife from mafia are as under -

(1) Steps taken at the State level:

(i) Legal protection has been provided to wild animals against hunting and commercial exploitation under the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

(ii) State level and District level coordination committees have been set up in several States to prevent poaching and illegal trade in wildlife.

(iii) State Wildlife Authorities carry out regular checking of the stocks of dealers in birds.

(2) Steps taken at National level

(i) Government of India has set up Regional and Sub-regional Offices for wildlife preservation in major export and trade centres of the country to prevent smuggling of wild animals and their products.

(ii) Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has been empowered under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 to apprehend and prosecute wildlife offenders. Anti poaching efforts are being coordinated with INTERPOL.

(iii) Financial and technical help is being extended to the States under various Centrally Sponsored Schemes, viz. Project Tiger, Project Elephant, Development of National Parks and Sanctuaries and Eco-development around Protected Areas for enhancing the capacity and infrastructure of the States for providing effective protection to wild animals. Financial assistance is, in particular, being provided for raising `Strike Forces` and providing arms to the protection staff for combating the organised poachers. Assistance is also provided for giving rewards to the informers for eliciting information about poachers and smugglers.

(iv) A Special Coordination and Enforcement Committee has been set up under the chairmanship of Secretary, Environment &

Forests, Government of India, for control of poaching and illegal trade in wildlife.

(v) Export of wild animals and their derivatives is prohibited under EXIM policy.

(vi) A National Conference of Forests and Environment Ministers of State Government was held on 29th and 30th January, 2001. It was resolved to organise existing protection staff into viable formations for effective control of poaching and to create enforcement infrastructure both within and out side protected areas.

(vii) Ministry of Home Affairs has written to all the State Governments to lend a helping hand to the field formations to curb poaching and illegal trade in wildlife.

(3) Steps taken at International level.

(i) Government of India seeks international co-operation under the provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) for control of illegal trade in wildlife items.

(ii) To control transboundary trade a protocol has been signed with Peoples` Republic of China and a MOU has been signed with His Majesty`s Government of Nepal.

(iii) A Global Tiger Forum of Tiger Range Countries has been created for addressing international issues related to Tiger Conservation.

ANNEXURE REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PART (c) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.5334 FOR REPLY ON 29.4.2002 REGARDING SETTING UP OF FOREST COMMISSION

Salient features of the Wildlife Conservation Strategy-2002 adopted by the Indian Board for Wildlife

1. Wildlife and forests shall be declared priority sector at the national level for which funds should be earmarked.

2. Law enforcement agencies must ensure that those engaged in poaching, illicit trade in wildlife and wildlife products, destruction of their habitat, and such other illegal activities are given quick and deterrent punishment.

3. The potential in wildlife tourism should be fully tapped, taking care that it does not have adverse impact on wildlife and protected areas. The revenue earned from increased tourism should be used entirely to augment available resources for conservation.

4. No diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes from critical and ecologically fragile wildlife habitat shall be allowed.

5. Lands falling within 10 km. of the boundaries of National Parks and Sanctuaries should be notified as Eco-fragile zones under section 3
(v) of the Environment (Protection) Act and Rule 5 Sub-rule 5
(viii) & (x) of the Environment (Protection) Rules.

6. Removal of encroachments and illegal activities from within forestlands and Protected Areas.

7. Settlement of rights in National Parks and Sanctuaries should not be used to exclude or reduce the areas that are crucial and integral part of the wildlife habitat.

8. More than 2000 vacant posts in the frontline staff of Protected Areas shall be filled immediately and provided basic infrastructure for efficient discharge of duties. Ban on recruitment of staff against vacant post should be lifted on lines with the Police Department.